



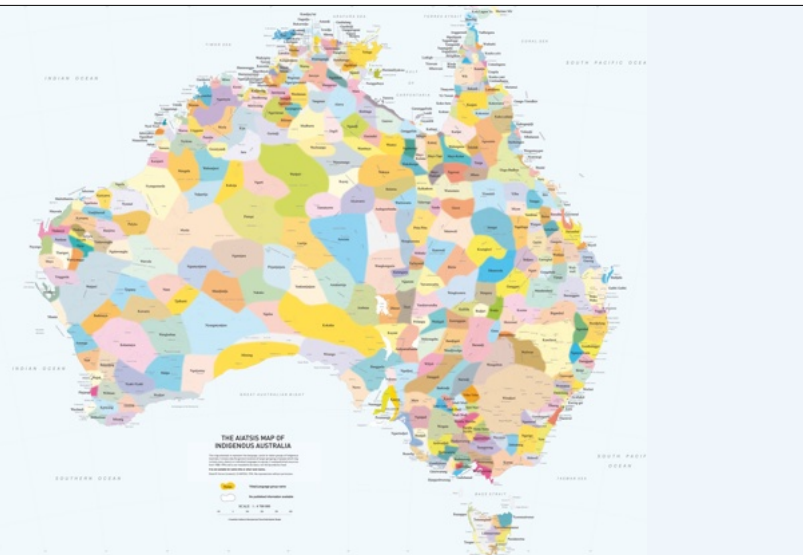
THE  
LEARNING  
FUTURE

## Strategy for Every School

Future Fest Sydney

20 February 2026

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Director of Leadership + Culture  
Director of Learning Environments



# How are you feeling right now?



# What did you sign up for?

This session is designed for those who want great ideas to come to life, within complexity of a school environment. We will explore the

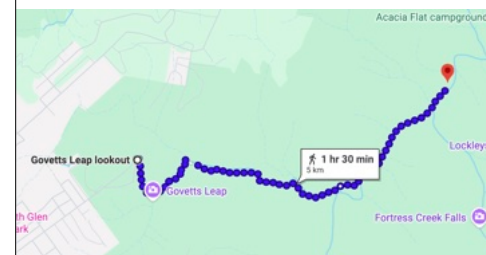
**difference between making plans and designing strategy,**

**simple and complex problems, and**

**biologic and mechanistic ways of working.**

Through hands-on activities, shared artefacts, and collaborative sense-making, you'll leave with an actionable framework, immediately usable tools to support strategic design, decision-making, and action in your school.

# Make a Plan vs Design Strategy

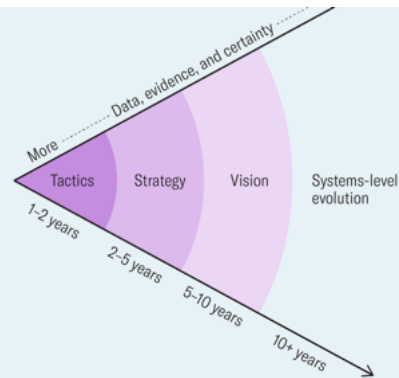




# Make a Plan vs Design Strategy



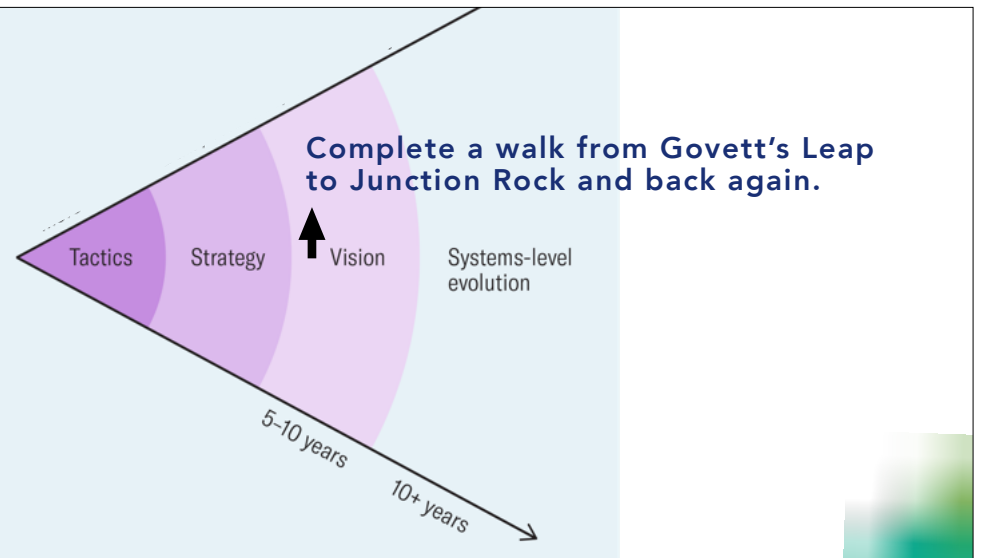
Instead of arbitrarily assigning goals on a quarterly or yearly time line, use a cone instead. First identify highly probable events for which there's already data or evidence, then work outward. Each section of the cone is a strategic approach, and it encompasses the one before it until you reach major systems-level evolution at your company.

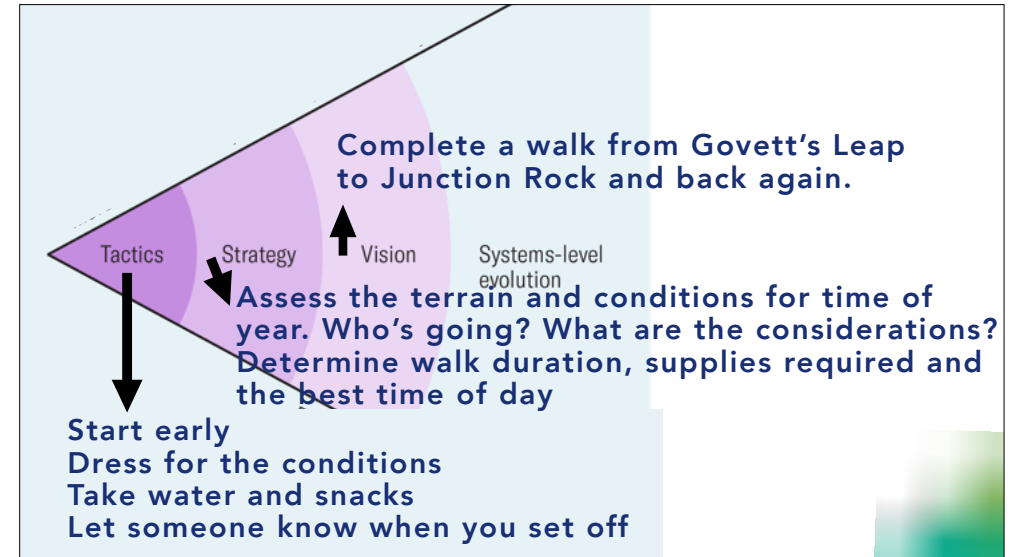
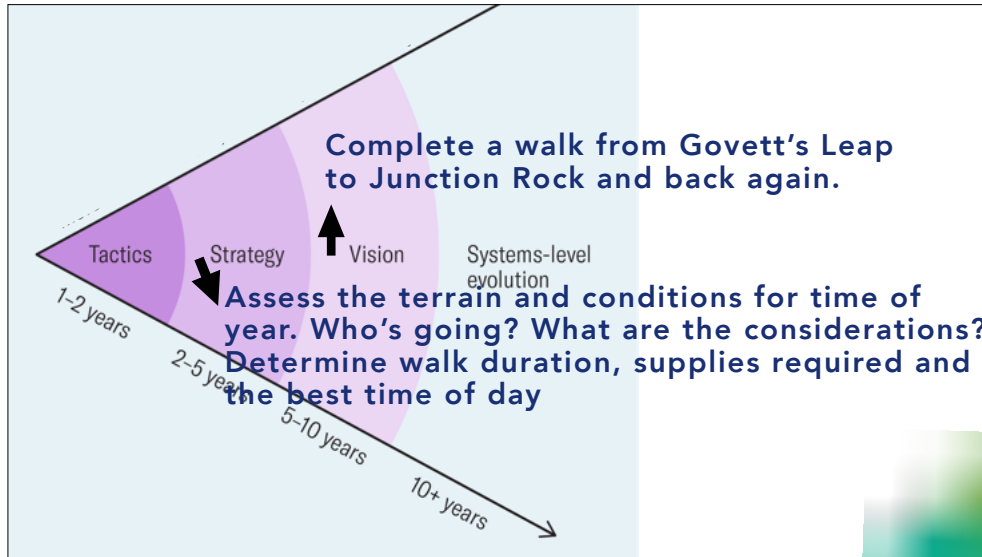


Credit: Prof. Amy Webb, How to Do Strategic Planning Like a Futurist, HBR



Complete a walk from Govett's Leap to Junction Rock and back again.





Design begins with a problem

...but what type?

Complex vs Complicated

## A complex problem...



Multiple mitigating variables  
Multiple plausible options  
Multiple consequential outcomes

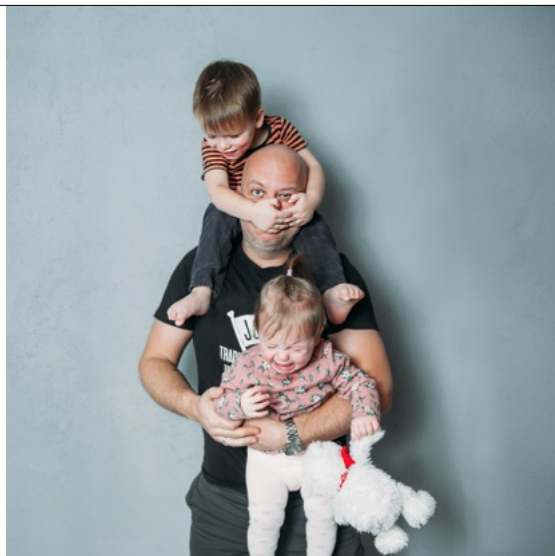


Simple	A still life arrangement on a wooden surface featuring three red chili peppers, an orange, and a small yellow card with handwritten text and a drawing of a bicycle.	Complicated
Complex	A man in a black t-shirt carrying two children on his shoulders and holding a white dog, identical to the image in the first slide.	Chaotic



“Often we attempt to dwell in the realm of the complicated when in fact we are operating in the realm of the complex”

Snyder, OECD, 2013

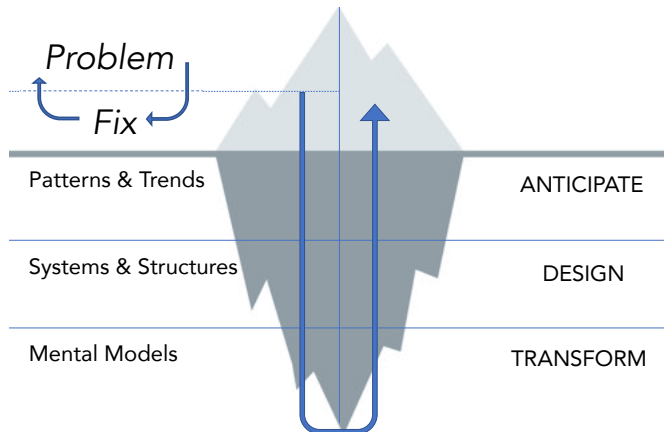


## Design begins with a complex problem...

What have you noticed?



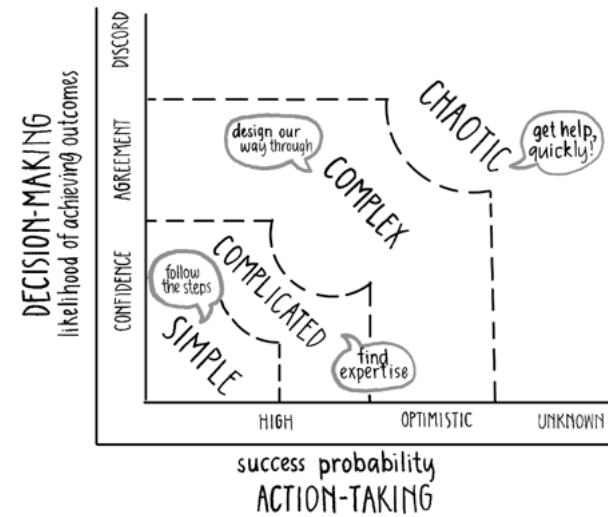
Not Strategic



Strategic



Adaptation from Peter Senge (1990)  
The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.



# Complex problem...

Needs a team



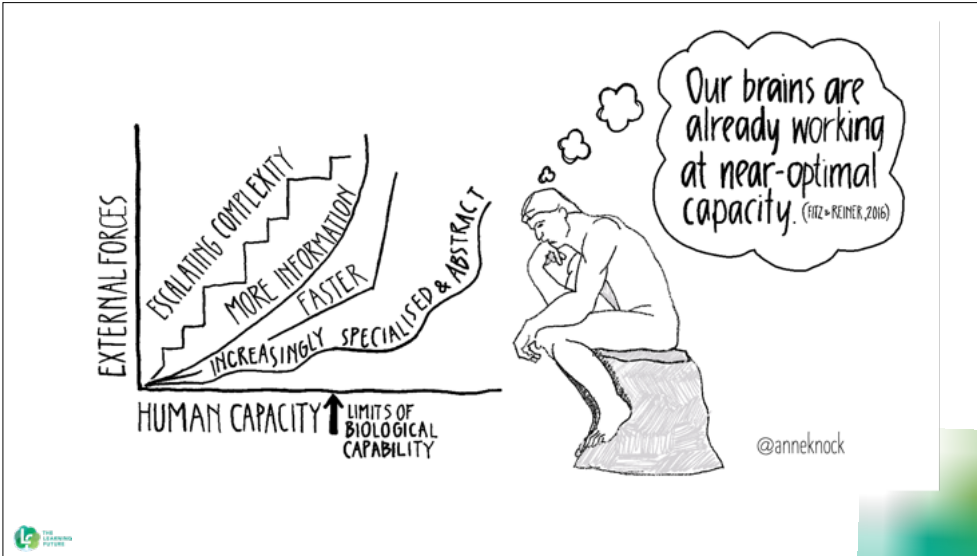
## The Extended Mind

“Thinking outside our brain means skilfully engaging entities external to our heads - the feeling and movements of **our bodies**, the **physical spaces** in which we learn and work, and the minds of **other people** around us - drawing them into our mental processes.”

Credit: Anne Murphy Paul  
The Extended Mind: The power of thinking outside the brain (2022)



© Stephanie Anestis Photography



**“What we need to do is think outside the brain.”**

Credit: Anne Murphy Paul, *The Extended Mind: The power of thinking outside the brain* (2022)

The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain, Annie Murphy Paul (2022)  
 Represented by Anne Knock

## Distributed Cognition



“Individual cognition is simply not sufficient to meet the challenges of the world in which **information is so abundant, expertise is so specialised and issues so complex.** . . the intriguing finding that when a group of individuals are thinking well together, their brain activity come to resemble one another’s”

Credit: Anne Murphy Paul, The Extended Mind: The power of thinking outside the brain (2022)



One major contributor to the success of group cognition . . . is the effective use of **shared artefacts** or **tangible representations** of the task to be completed - which are, ideally, large, complex, persistent and revisable.

Without the capacity to refer to a single artefact. . . these co-workers ended up not singing from the same sheet of music.

Credit: Anne Murphy Paul, The Extended Mind: The power of thinking outside the brain (2022)



## Mechanistic vs Biologic

# Mechanistic

## Simple & Complicated

- Hierarchical structure
- Knowledge & skills siloed
- Role definitions
- Routines
- Reducible/lock-step functions
- Linear processes
- Chain of command
- Stick to the fixed plan

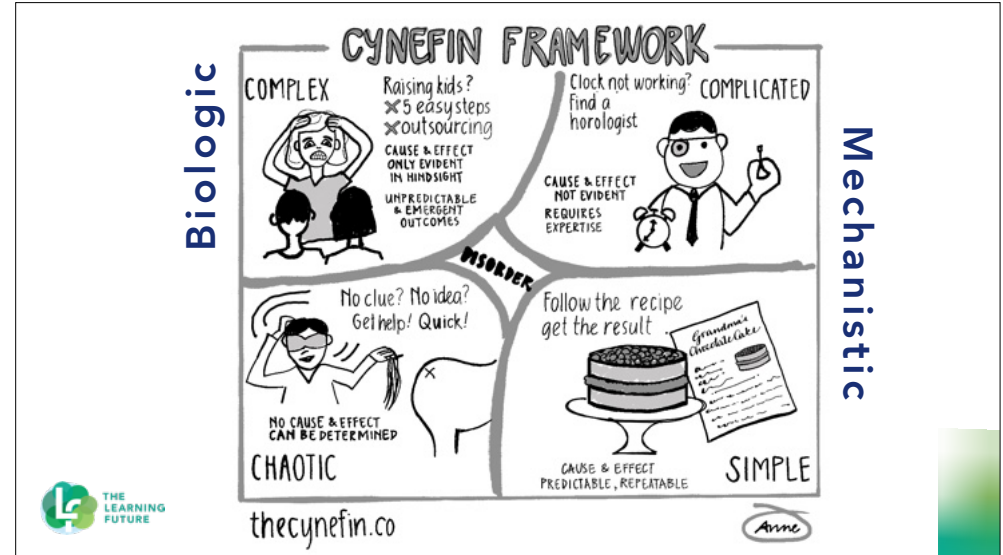


# Biologic

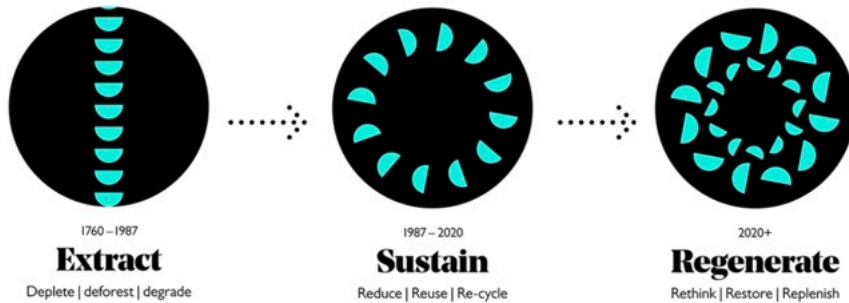
## Complex



- Feedback loops
- Knowledge & skills shared
- Cross-scale relationship
- Sense making
- Adaptive strategies
- Looking for patterns
- Learning while doing
- Prototyping and testing



# Regenerative Practices



<https://www.thersa.org/regenerative-futures>

## Mono-culture forest



## Mixed-growth natural forest



### Mono-culture forest



### Mixed-growth natural forest



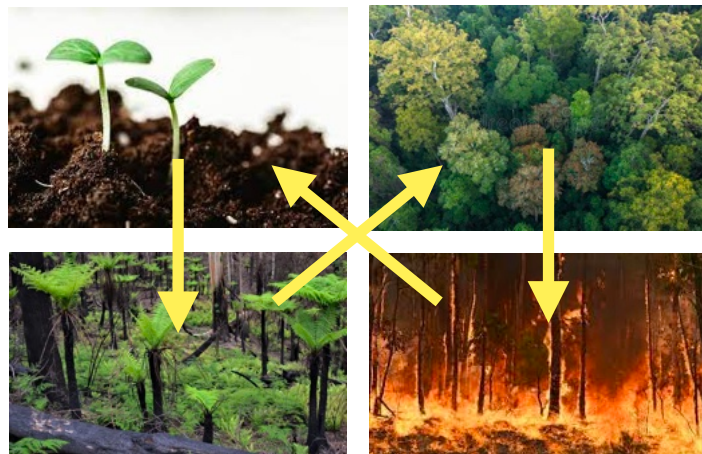
**Regeneration**, as one aspect of the general process of growth, is a **primary attribute of all living systems. Without it there could be no life**, for the very maintenance of an organism depends upon the incessant turnover by which all tissues and organs **constantly renew themselves.**



**Is your school a living system?**



[www.britannica.com/science/regeneration-biology](http://www.britannica.com/science/regeneration-biology)



Ref: Rob Cunney, Q Community/Liberating Structures Special Interest Group & liberating structures.com

## Regenerative Ecocycle

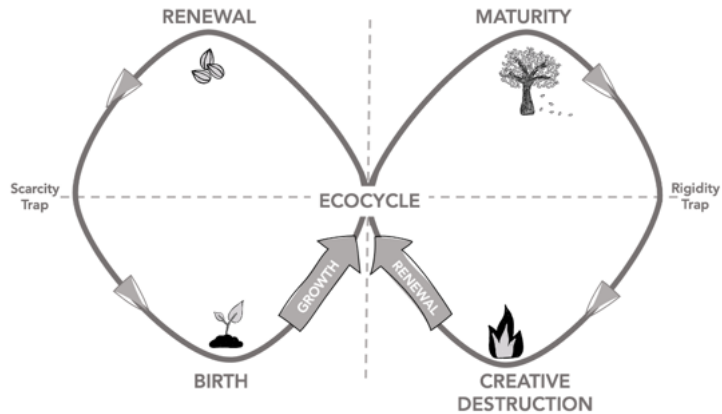
The ecocycle suggests that the long-term sustainability of adaptive organisations requires that elements of those organisations undergo periodic, natural processes of destruction and renewal.



Guide to Ecocycle Mapping  
**FSG: REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE**

### Regenerative Ecocycle

Explore all your activities to assess what you are doing, but shouldn't; what you probably should be doing, but aren't; and where resources can be put to better use.



# How might this work in practice?

The Learning Future logo is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

## Education Transformed ep19

### THE LEARNING FUTURE podcast

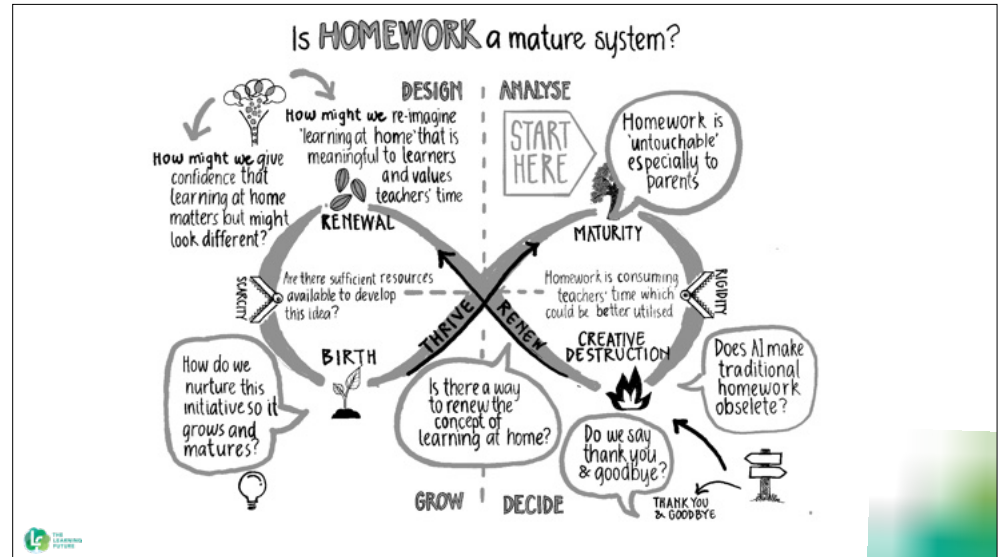
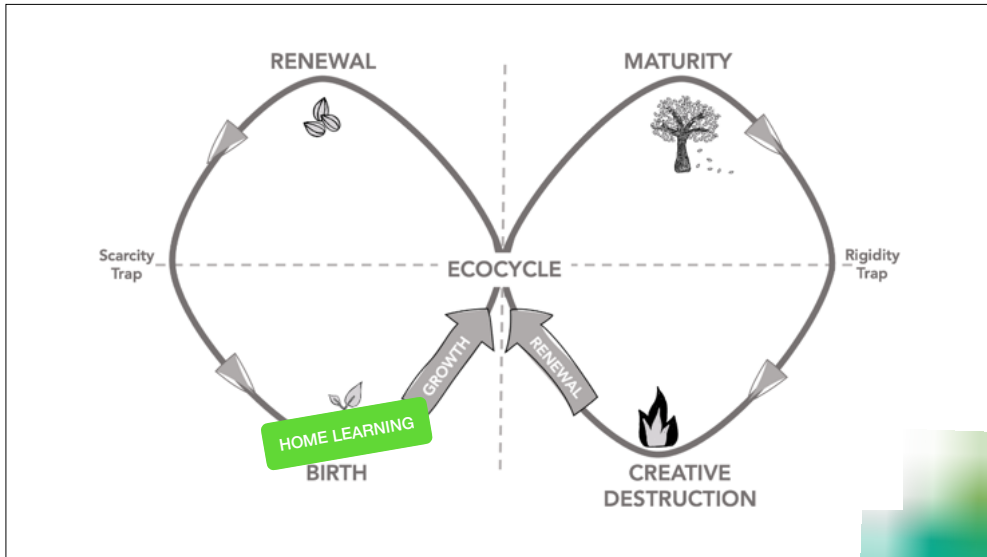
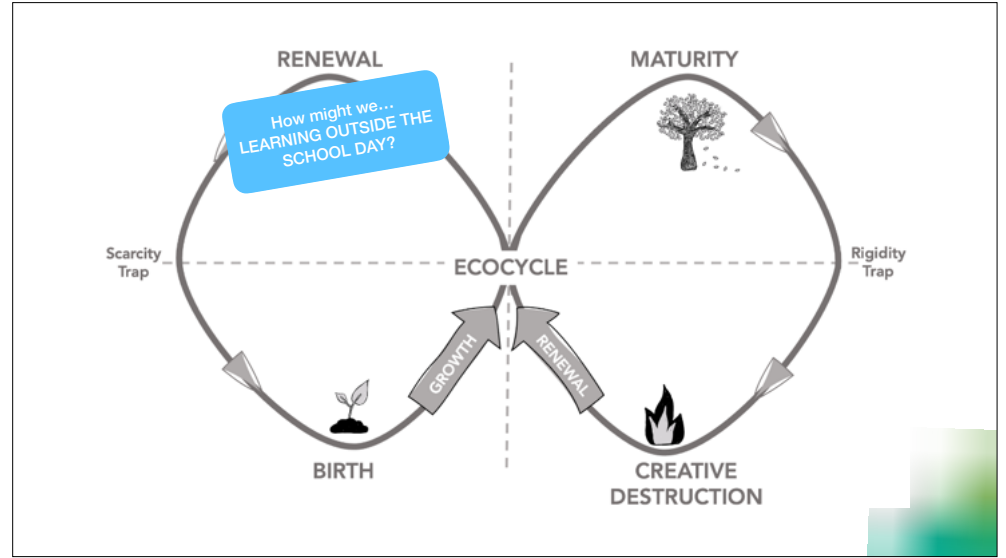
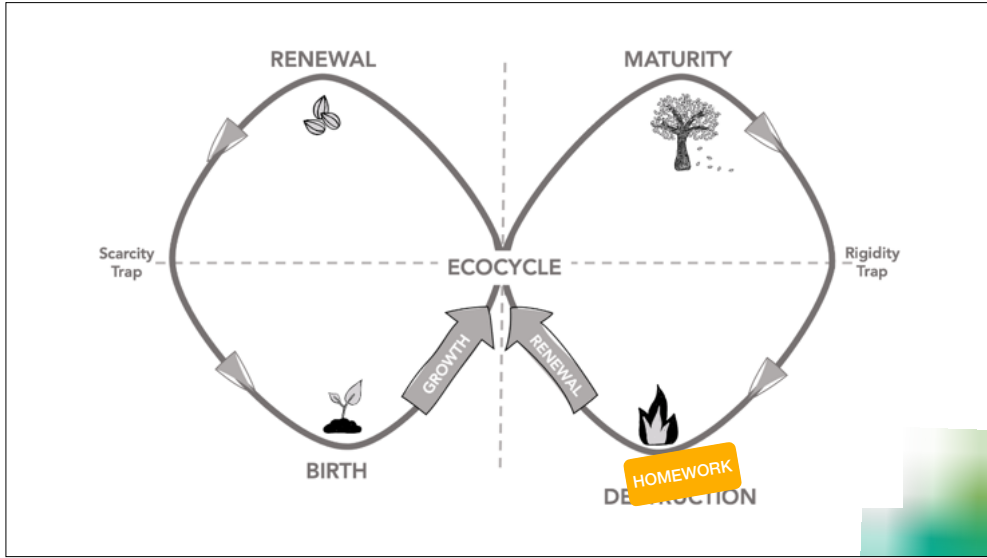
with Louka Parry

“The traditional model for homework, where you grade what the students bring back with them on paper is dead.”

**DYLAN WILIAM**

Salzburg Global Seminar logo is in the bottom left corner.

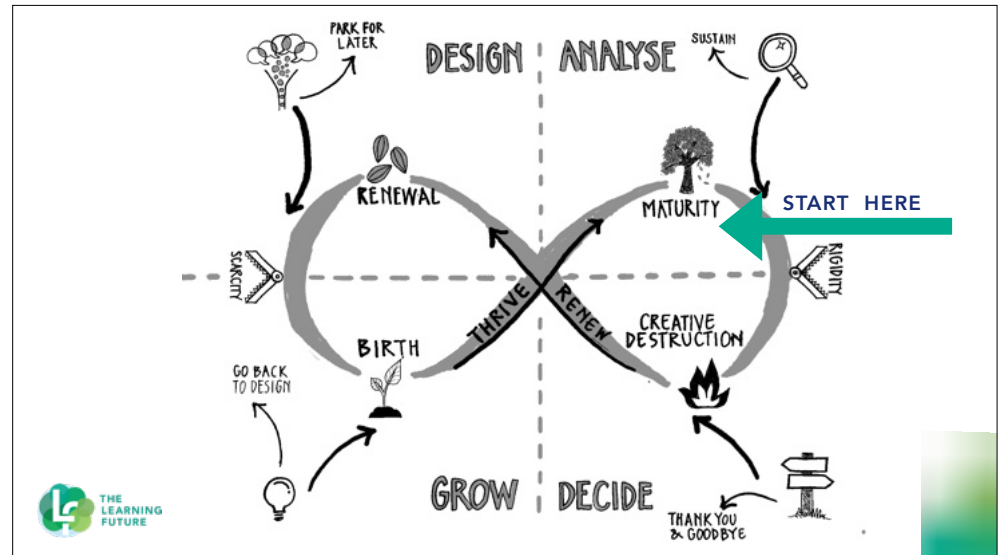
This diagram is identical to the one in the top-left slide, but with a green rectangular box highlighting the 'MATURITY' stage. The word 'HOMEWORK' is written in white capital letters inside this box, positioned over the tree icon.

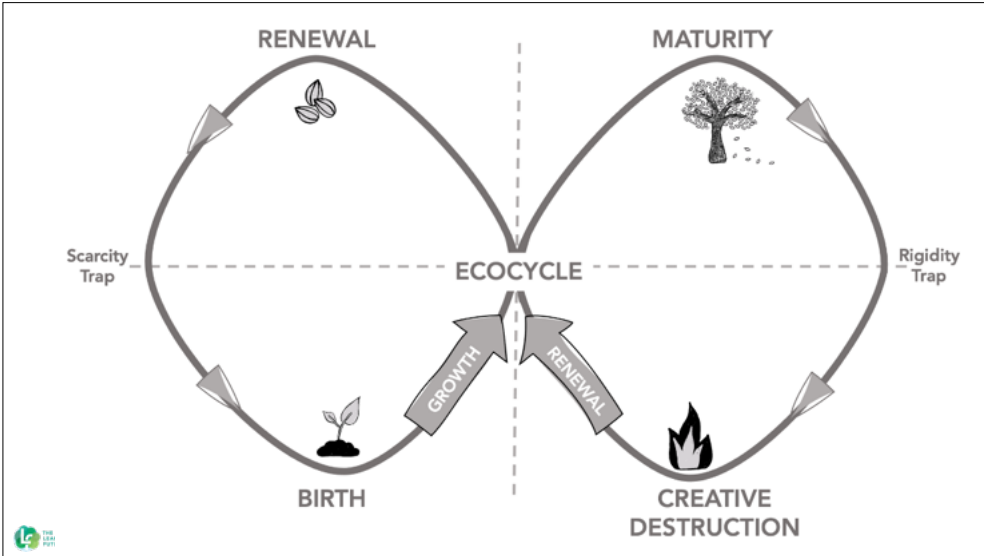


# What's your complex problem?



# What is at maturity?





Don't teach for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. The point is to live everything.

**Live the questions now.**

Perhaps then, someday in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

- Rainer Maria Rilke 1903



School by Design: A Field Guide to Transforming Learning, Culture and Place

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Thank you!

Sign up to our free LearnLetter for resources.

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